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WHAT IF™ SHANG-CHI MASTER OF KUNG FU® FOUGHT ON THE SIDE OF FU MANCHU?

HOBERG '79

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STAN LEE PRESENTS: **A STUNNING SAGA OF AN ALTERNATE REALITY!**

DOUG MOENCH * RICK HOBERG * WRAY & STEVENS * ROSEN, LETTERER * JIM SHOOTER * ROY THOMAS
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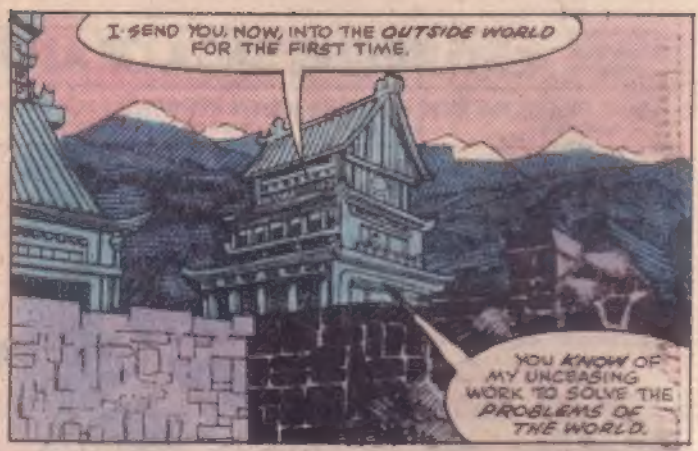
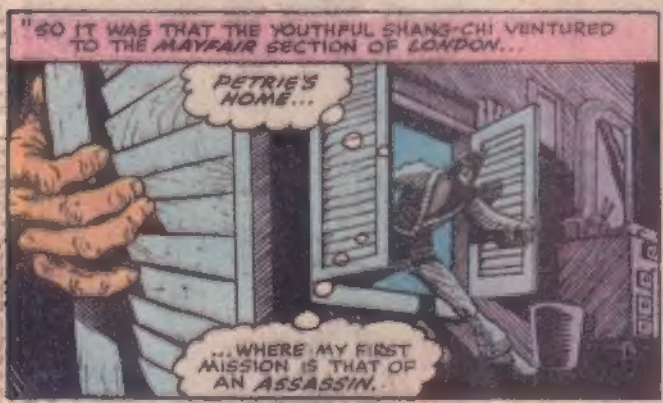
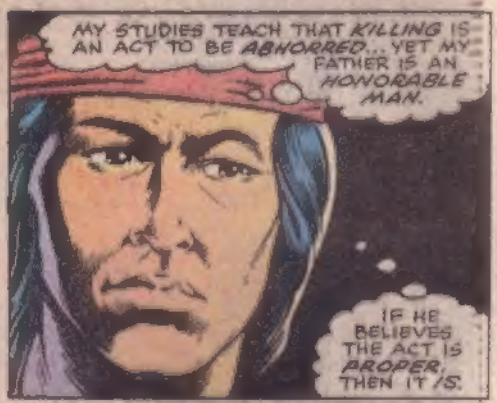
"BUT FIRST, LET US WATCH THE SHANG-CHI OF YOUR REALITY...ON A DAY IN HIS PAST DESTINED TO BE THE TURNING POINT OF HIS FUTURE...
SHANG-CHI, CHILD OF MY FLESH, ALL OF YOUR NINETEEN YEARS HAVE BEEN SPENT HERE IN MY HONAN RETREAT--
--WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN RIGOROUSLY TRAINED IN BOTH THE MENTAL AND MARTIAL ARTS..


I SEND YOU, NOW, INTO THE OUTSIDE WORLD FOR THE FIRST TIME.
YOU KNOW OF MY UNCEASING WORK TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD.

YOU ARE NOT AWARE THAT TREACHEROUS FOES HAVE ATTEMPTED TO THWART ME. ONE SUCH, A DR. PETRIE, MAY WELL BE TERMED A SERVANT OF VILE EVIL.
MY SON, YOU MUST KILL HIM!

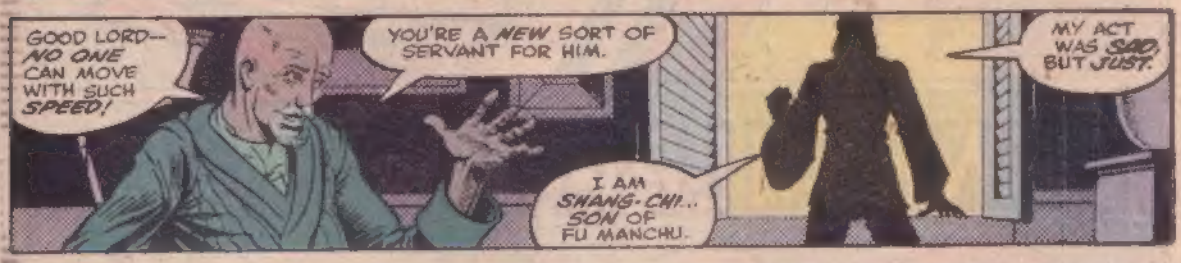

"SO IT WAS THAT THE YOUTHFUL SHANG-CHI VENTURED TO THE MAYFAIR SECTION OF LONDON...
PETRIE'S HOME...
...WHERE MY FIRST MISSION IS THAT OF AN ASSASSIN.


MY STUDIES TEACH THAT KILLING IS AN ACT TO BE ABHORRED...YET MY FATHER IS AN HONORABLE MAN.
IF HE BELIEVES THE ACT IS PROPER, THEN IT IS.

BUT...THE FIEND IS SO OLD...SO FEEBLE.
OF WHAT HARM CAN HE POSSIBLY BE--?

I WAS TAUGHT THAT REVENGE GAINS NOTHING...

WH-WHO?



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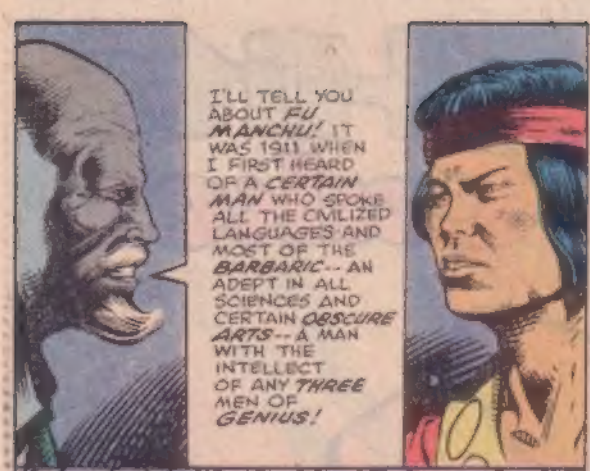


"BUT BY 1932, HE HAD DEVELOPED THE ELIXIR VITAE -- THE OIL OF LIFE -- TO PROLONG HIS VITALITY. IF ANYTHING, HE HAS GROWN YOUNGER SINCE THEN. AGELESSNESS HAS FREED HIM TO WORK TOWARD HIS SINGLE GOAL: DOMINATION OF THE WORLD BY HIS SI-FAN, A SINISTER SECRET SOCIETY WHICH INCLUDES DACOITS, PHANSIGARS, THUGEES, AND OTHER TERRIBLE CULTS. YET HE ALSO EMPLOYS SPIDERS, RATS, REPTILES -- AS WELL AS BEAUTIFUL WOMEN -- AS HIS PAWNS!

"SHANG-CHI'S REVULSION DROVE HIM TO *CONFRONT* FU MANCHU, FOR THE LAST TIME AS *FATHER* TO *SON*...

SPEAK *NOT*, SHANG-CHI. SINCE YOU HAVE LEARNED *UNFORTUNATE DETAILS* CONCERNING MY WORK, YOU ARE BETTER SERVED BY *LISTENING*.

I LISTEN.

KNOW THEN THAT MY *INITIAL* GOAL WAS SIMPLY THE RESTORATION OF CHINA'S *ANCIENT GLORY*--

--UNTIL THE *COMMUNIST REVOLUTION* AND *SIR DENIS NAYLAND SMITH* DESTROYED MUCH OF MY POWER.

I WAS FORCED TO *REBUILD* THE SI-FAN WITHOUT PEKING'S *BACKING*-- BUT AFTER *TWENTY YEARS* I HAVE *SUCCEEDED*.

NOW I STAND *ALONE*, THE *EMPEROR* OF AN INVISIBLE WORLDWIDE *EMPIRE*, OPPOSED TO *ALL* ORGANIZED GOVERNMENTS--

--AND I SWEAR BY THE GODS OF *CATHAY* THAT, IN MY WISDOM, I SHALL DESTROY *THEM* THIS TIME.

FATHER, YOU ARE CONVINCED THAT *YOUR* PATH IS THE *ONLY PROPER WAY*... AND, LIKE *ALL* SUCH MEN--

--YOU ARE *MAD*.

WHEN *NEXT* WE MEET, IT WILL BE AS *ENEMIES*.

SO *BE* IT, SHANG-CHI. SON OR *NO*, YOU HAVE JUST SEALED YOUR *DOOM*.

"BUT DESPITE THE *THREAT*, SHANG-CHI HAS GONE ON TO REMARKABLE *SUCCESS*, BECOMING NAYLAND SMITH'S *ALLY* IN THE FIERCE STRUGGLE AGAINST FU MANCHU-- A STRUGGLE SHARED BY *CLIVE RESTON*, *BLACK JACK TARR*, AND *LEIKO WU*.

"SO IT IS... IN *ONE* REALITY.

BUT, WHAT IF SHANG-CHI HAD SLAIN DR. PETRIE WITHOUT *INTERFERENCE*?

"WHAT IF HE HAD ESCAPED, STILL *CONVINCED* THAT PETRIE WAS *EVIL*?

"WHAT IF HE HAD DEPARTED A FEW CRUCIAL SECONDS *BEFORE* NAYLAND SMITH ENTERED THAT ROOM?

PETRIE, OLD MAN... I HAVE FAILED YOU.

BUT I SWEAR ON YOUR *SOUL*, PETRIE, YOU *SHALL BE AVENGED!*

"LET US *WATCH*... AND LISTEN TO THE THOUGHTS OF A *DIFFERENT* SHANG-CHI!"

"I RETURN TO MY FATHER'S *LONDON SANCTUARY*. HE WILL BE *PLEASED*...

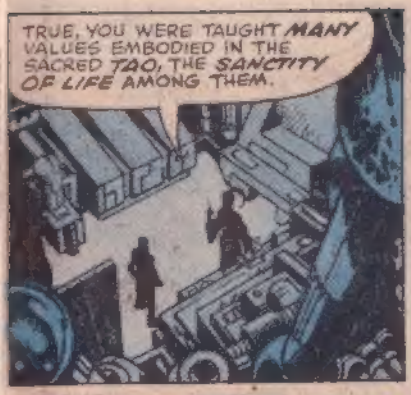
YOU HAVE *SUCCEEDED*, MY SON?

YES, HONORABLE ONE.

"... BUT I... I AM STILL *TROUBLED* BY THE DEED.

I HAVE SLAIN THE EVIL ONE IN YOUR SERVICE, FATHER, DEFYING EVERY *SPIRITUAL VALUE* I HAVE BEEN TAUGHT.

I DO NOT... *UNDERSTAND*.


TRUE, YOU WERE TAUGHT MANY VALUES EMBODIED IN THE SACRED TAO, THE SANCTITY OF LIFE AMONG THEM.

BUT I AND MY TEACHERS SHAPED MORE THAN YOUR MIND AND SPIRIT...

"WE SHAPED, TOO, YOUR BODY...

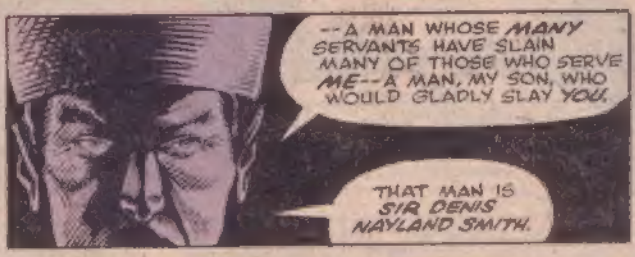
...TRAINING IT UNDER THE MOST DEMANDING DISCIPLINES OF THE MARTIAL ARTS...
FAPT!

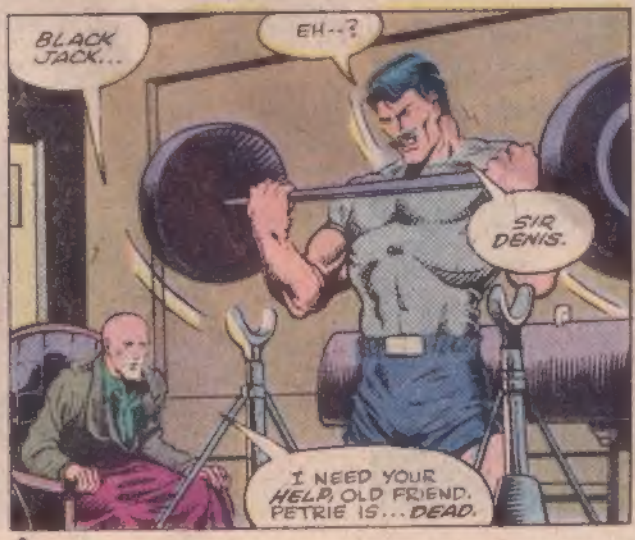
"...FORGING YOU INTO A VERITABLE LIVING WEAPON...

KUD!
"...AN INSTRUMENT EASILY CAPABLE OF INFLICTING DEATH.

WHY DID YOU NOT PROTEST THE CONTRADICTION THEN?
IT WAS IN THE CAUSE OF DEFENSE, NOT--
DEFENSE, YES, BUT WHEN ONE IS ATTACKED, THE MOST EFFECTIVE DEFENSE IS A LIKE OFFENSE.

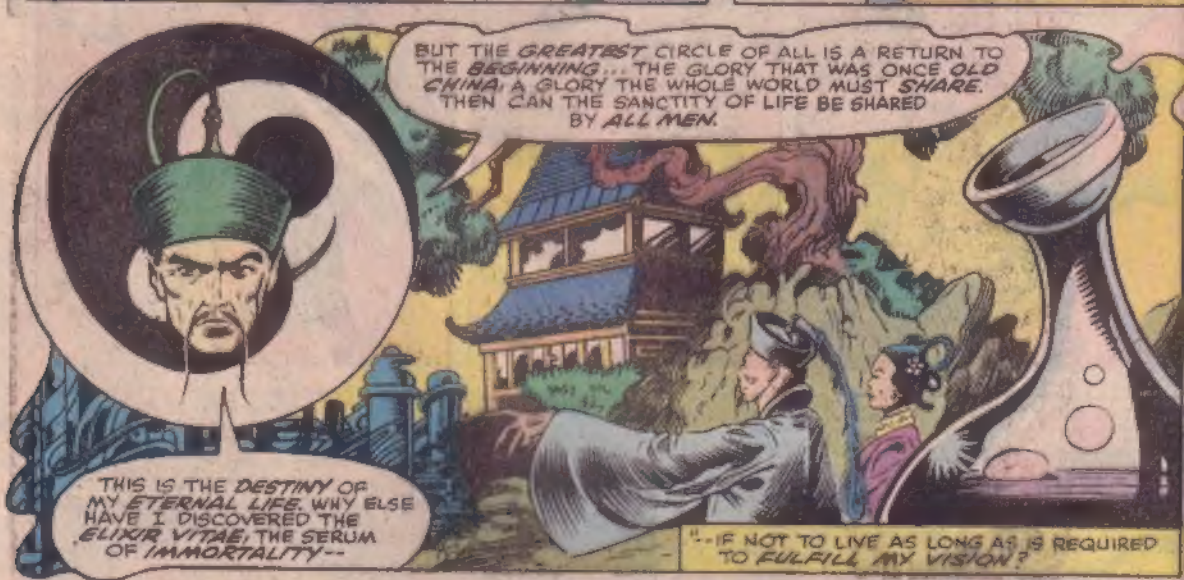
AND NOW, IN MY SERVICE, YOU HAVE SLAIN DR. PETRIE, A SERVANT OF THE MOST EVIL MAN IN THE WORLD--


--A MAN WHOSE MANY SERVANTS HAVE SLAIN MANY OF THOSE WHO SERVE ME--A MAN, MY SON, WHO WOULD GLADLY SLAY YOU.
THAT MAN IS SIR DENIS NAYLAND SMITH.


BLACK JACK...
EH--?
SIR DENIS.
I NEED YOUR HELP, OLD FRIEND. PETRIE IS... DEAD.

THUS, MY SON, THE TIME HAS COME TO TEMPORARILY SET ASIDE THE PHILOSOPHIES OF NONVIOLENCE -- TO EMPLOY THE VERY METHODS CHOSEN BY THOSE WHO SEEK TO CRUSH MY VISION OF A GREATER WORLD, A WORLD OF PEACE.
FORGIVE ME, CELESTIAL FATHER...

...BUT YOU DO SEEM TO SPEAK... IN CIRCLES.
PERHAPS, MY SON...


BUT THE GREATEST CIRCLE OF ALL IS A RETURN TO THE BEGINNING... THE GLORY THAT WAS ONCE OLD CHINA, A GLORY THE WHOLE WORLD MUST SHARE. THEN CAN THE SANCTITY OF LIFE BE SHARED BY ALL MEN.
THIS IS THE DESTINY OF MY ETERNAL LIFE. WHY ELSE HAVE I DISCOVERED THE ELIXIR VITAE, THE SERUM OF IMMORTALITY--
"--IF NOT TO LIVE AS LONG AS IS REQUIRED TO FULFILL MY VISION?

AND NOW, SOON, MY VISION SHALL BECOME REALITY, AND THE SANCTITY OF LIFE SHALL CONQUER THE DISEASE OF DEATH AND KILLING.

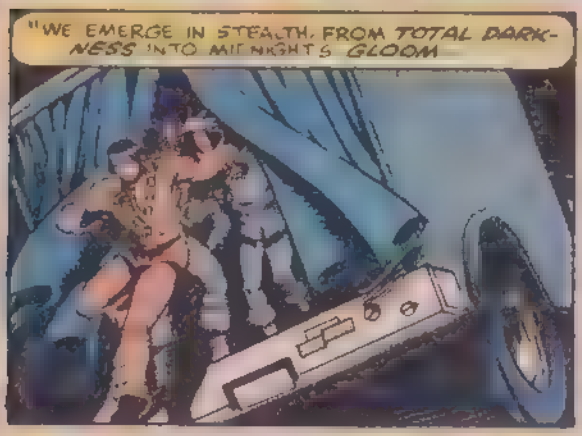
BUT... HOW MAY THE PRACTICE OF KILLING SERVE THE INTERESTS OF NON-KILLING?

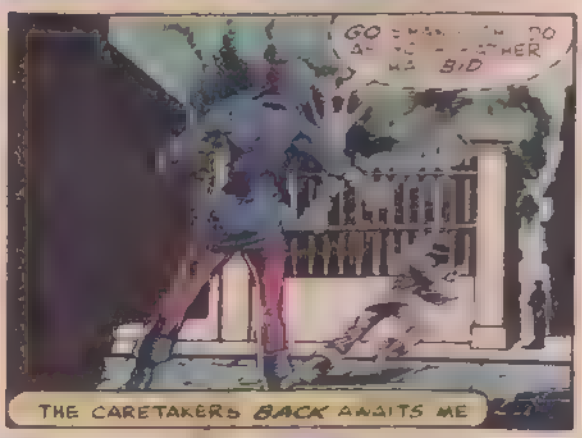
BY EMPLOYING SELECTIVE KILLING, MY SON-- BY KILLING ONLY THOSE WHO WISH TO KILL.

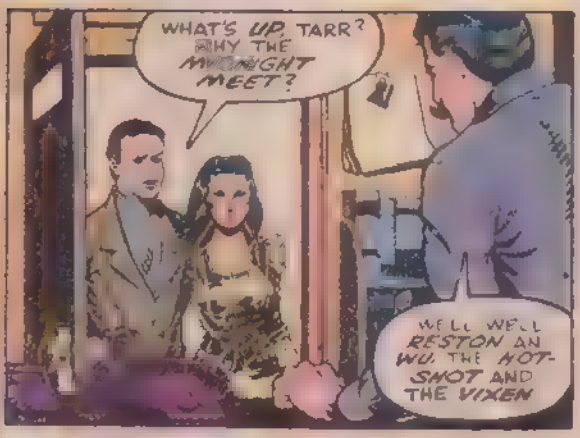
THAT DOES IT, SIR DENIS! THIS TIME WE GOTTA KILL THAT STINKIN' FU MANCHU-- ONCE AN FOR ALL!

CONTINUED AFTER 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

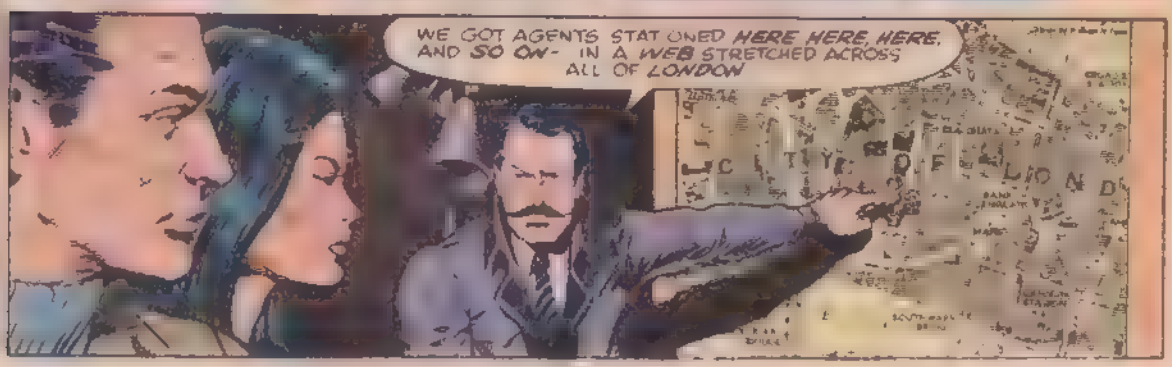
YOU WILL GO TONIGHT TO HIGHGATE CEMETERY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF LONDON
AND THERE YOU WILL FIND FIVE DACOITS SLAIN BY SMITH TWENTY YEARS AGO
YOU WILL RETRIEVE THEM
NIGHT THE CARETAKER HAS PASSED


"WE EMERGE IN STEALTH, FROM TOTAL DARKNESS INTO MIDNIGHT'S GLOOM


THE CARETAKER'S BACK AWAITS ME


WHAT'S UP, TARR? WHY THE MIDNIGHT MEET?
WELL WELL RESTON AN WU, THE HOT-SHOT AND THE VIXEN

AWRIGHT, YOU TWO LOVEBIRDS HERE'S THE STORY - AN TITLED 'NAILIN THE COFFIN ON FU MANCHU


WE GOT AGENTS STATIONED HERE HERE HERE, AND SO ON- IN A WEB STRETCHED ACROSS ALL OF LONDON

AND AS SOON AS ONE OF OUR MEN SEES THE FIRST SIGN OF FU'S DIRTY TRICKS

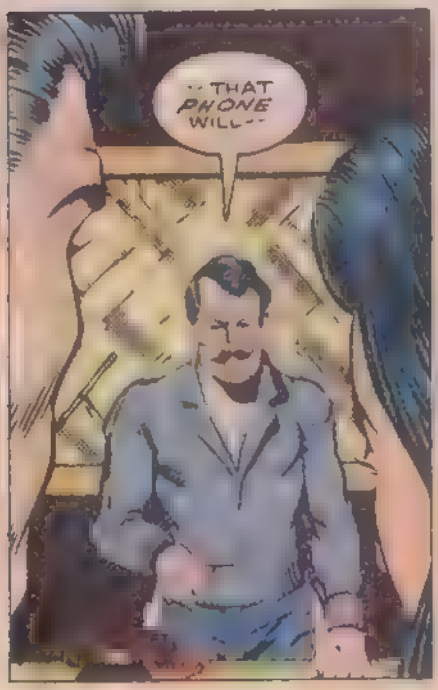
HIS SENSES ARE DULLED

AND THUS EAS. DEADENED
GO.

THE TRUCK LEAVES.

THIS IS IT

BETTER HURRY--
--BEFORE THEY SLIP TOO FAR AWAY


--THAT PHONE WILL--

RING!

YEAH?
TARR HERE-- AN' THIS BETTER BE ABOUT FU MANCHU

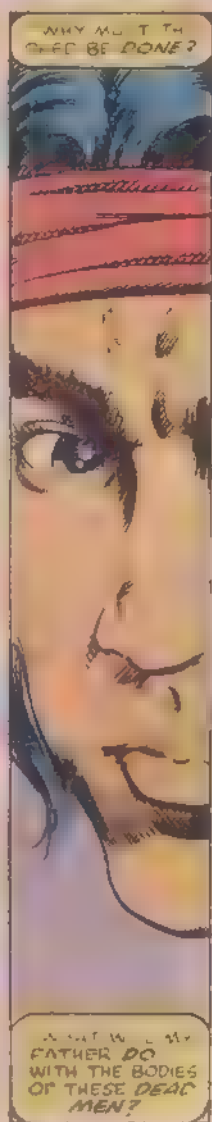
YES, IT MUST BE. A BUNCH OF CHINESE THUGS JUST ENTERED HIGHGATE CEMETERY
THEY TOOK OUT THE CARETAKER

HIGHGATE...RIGHT, GOT IT STAY RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

COME ON WE'RE IN LUCK
WHAT KIND OF LUCK?

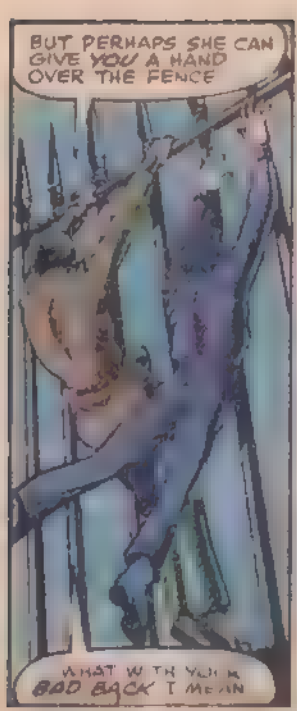
A DATE WITH THE BLOODY DEAD

'I STAND WATCH OVER THE DEAD MY EVERY SENSE ALERT TO INTERRUPTION ..
'AS MY FELLOW I CAN RETRIEVE FIVE MEMBERS OF THE DACOIT CULT SLAIN TWENTY YEARS IN THE PAST. AND I WONDER

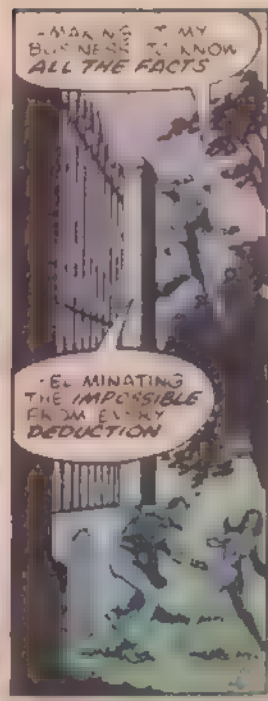

WHY MUST THE DEED BE DONE?
WHAT WILL MY FATHER DO WITH THE BODIES OF THESE DEAD MEN?

EXCERPT FROM THE JOURNAL OF DR. FU MANCHU
new serum, a precipitate derivative of the elixir vitae, is ready for final experimentation

I have been called the Dark Tarr
and while I frequently refer to this [illegible]
I have never lost the accuracy of its meaning
Indeed should this [illegible] prove my most [illegible]
I will have a [illegible] my most [illegible]
THE FIRST OF THE DEAD IS RAISED
REMAIN
THEY WENT OVER THE FENCE, TARR - STRAIGHT IN
DID THEY HAVE GUNS?
NO SHOVELS
WHAT THE--? NEVER MIND. LONG AS THEY DON'T HAVE AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, WE CAN HANDLE EM YOU STAY WITH THE CARETAKER
RIGHT
AWRIGHT REST'N SHE'S YOUR GIRLFRIEND
YOU CAN HELP HER GET OVER THE FEN
HUH--?!
LEIKO USUALLY DOESN'T NEED MUCH HELP, TARR


BUT PERHAPS SHE CAN GIVE YOU A HAND OVER THE FENCE
WHAT WITH YOUR BAD BACK I MEAN

HOW'D YOU KNOW ABOUT MY BACK?
ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR TARR I FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GRAND TRADITION -


ALL THE FACTS
ELIMINATING THE IMPOSSIBLE FROM EVERY DEDUCTION

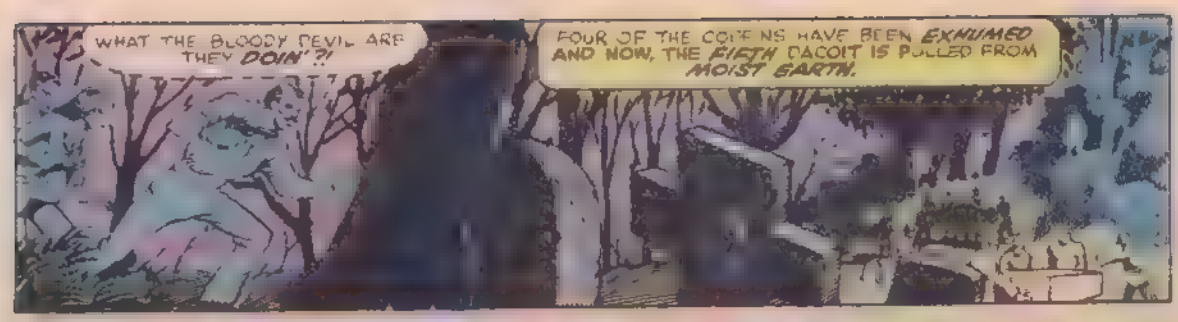
FAMILY TREE
QUIET-LIKE
TALENTS
BAH

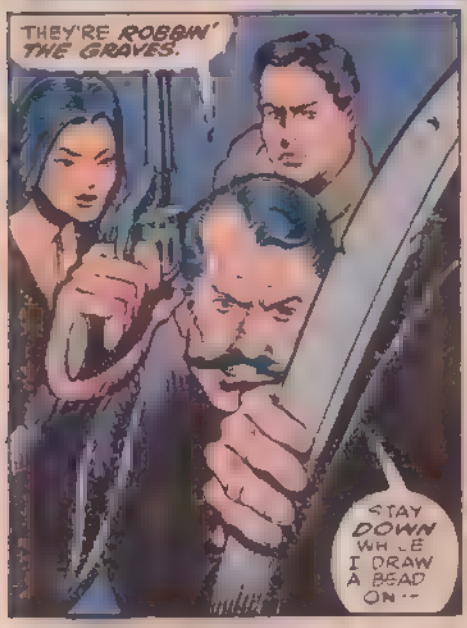
YOUR MASTER'S EXPERIMENT IS A SUCCESS
LOWLY

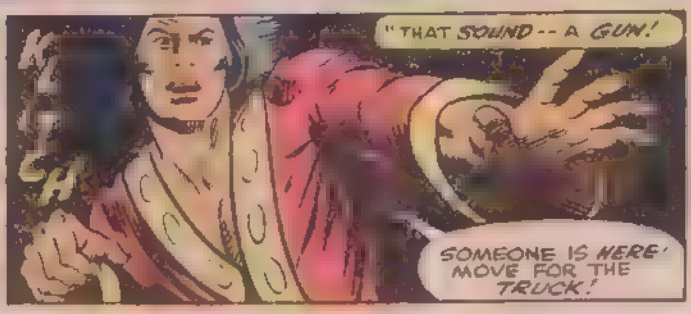
...BUT SOON MY LOYAL SON WILL OBTAIN MORE WORTHY SUBJECTS

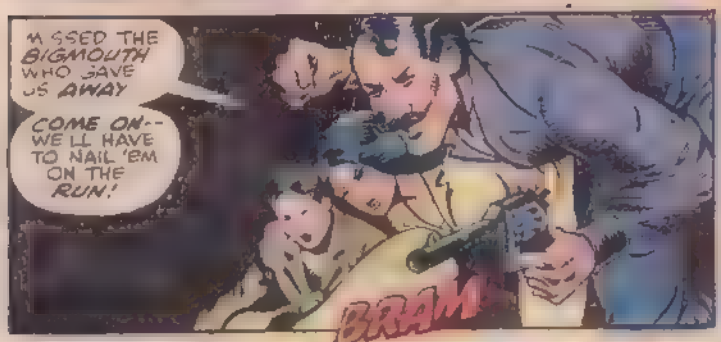
AND WHEN COMBINED WITH THE FRUITS OF MY PREVIOUS EXPERIMENT IN GROWTH...
...ENGLAND SHALL BE MINE!

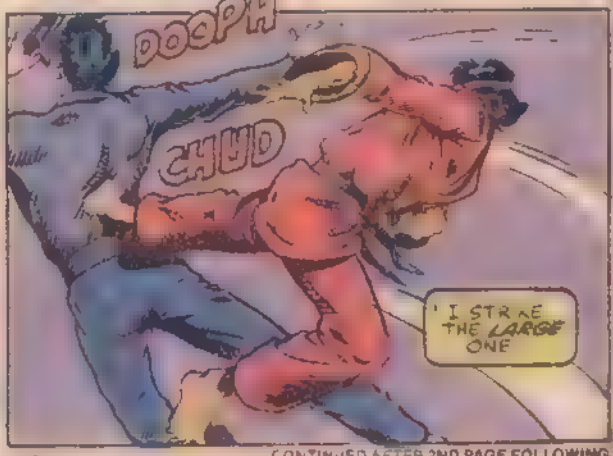
NUCLEAR CAPABILITY
REST
FOLLOW











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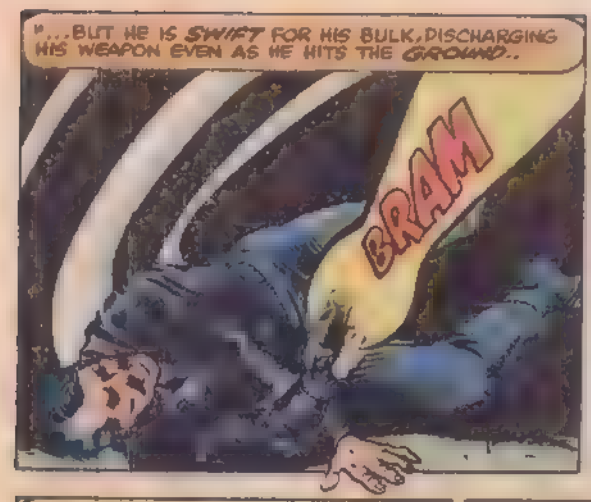

"...BUT HE IS SWIFT FOR HIS BULK, DISCHARGING HIS WEAPON EVEN AS HE HITS THE GROUND..
BRAM

AN ACTION I DID NOT BELIEVE POSSIBLE--
CHEOW
BUT A POSSIBILITY I HAVE ANTICIPATED.

HE LOOKS TO THE SYDE, NOT EXPECTING ME TO RISE ABOVE THE ANGEL

"BUT I HAVE NEED-
FAKT

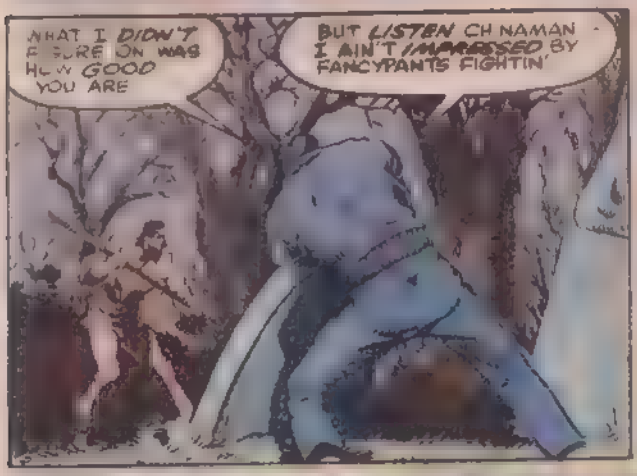
"- OF THE BRANCH
I WILL SERVE AS A BO STAFF

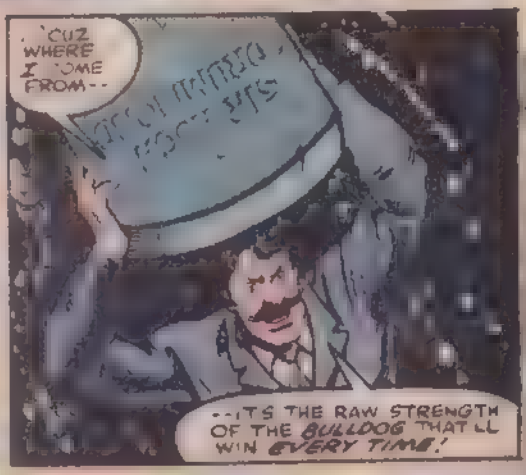
HU--
BAK

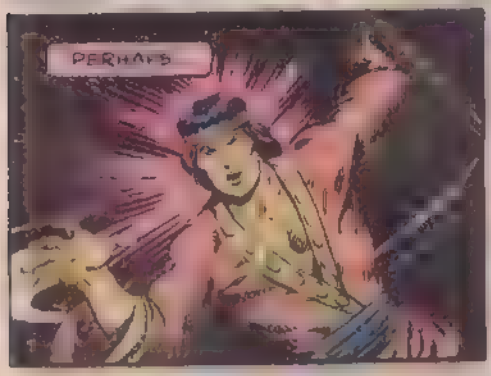
--YAHH!
HWAK

I...I DON'T BELIEVE IT--NO ONE EVER DUMPED BLACK JACK TARR THAT FAST!
WHO THE DEVIL ARE YOU?
I AM SHANG-CHI AND I SERVE CELESTIAL FU MANCHU.

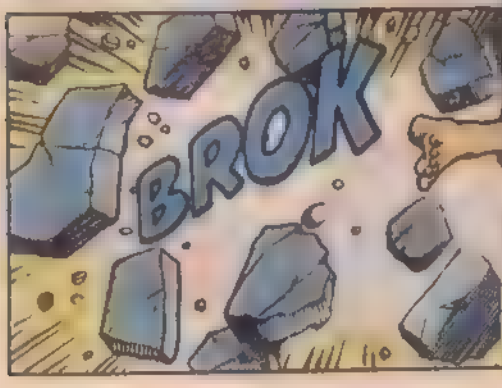
SO YOU ARE ONE OF HIS THUGS I FIGURED AS MUCH


WHAT I DIDN'T FIGURE ON WAS HOW GOOD YOU ARE
BUT LISTEN CHINAMAN I AIN'T IMPRESSED BY FANCYPANTS FIGHTIN'


'CUZ WHERE I COME FROM--
--IT'S THE RAW STRENGTH OF THE BULLDOG THAT'LL WIN EVERY TIME!


PERHAPS

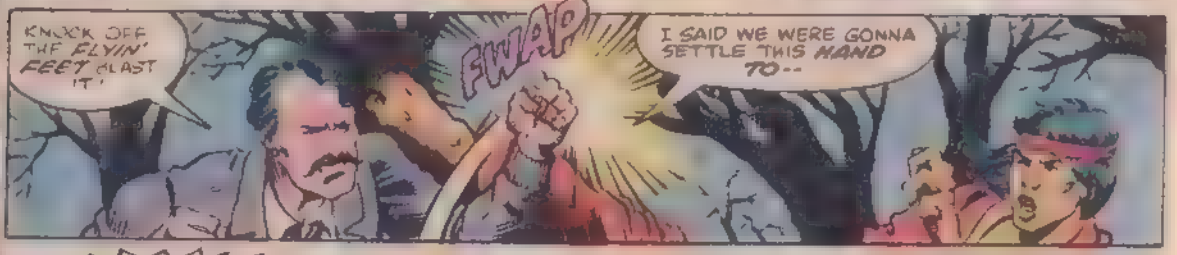
P. I SKILL AND LEVERAGE
--ARE ALWAYS AN EFFECTIVE COUNTER TO BRUTE STRENGTH.


BROK

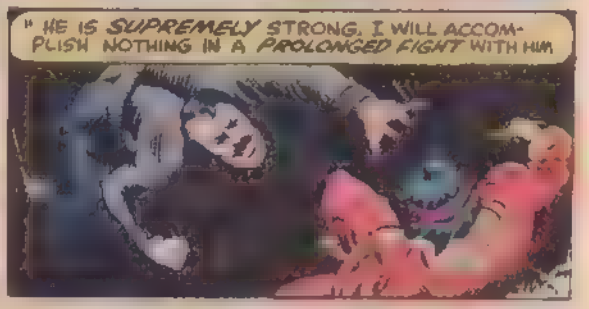
THAT DOES IT CHINAMAN WE'RE GONNA SETTLE THIS THING WITHOUT THE FANCY TRIMMIN'S JUST YOU AND ME GOIN' AT IT HAND TO-

HWOK

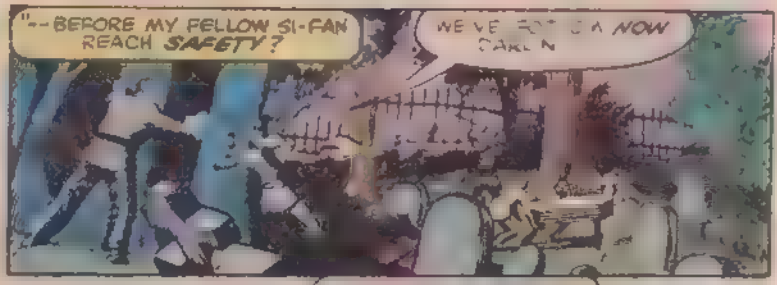
SWAK

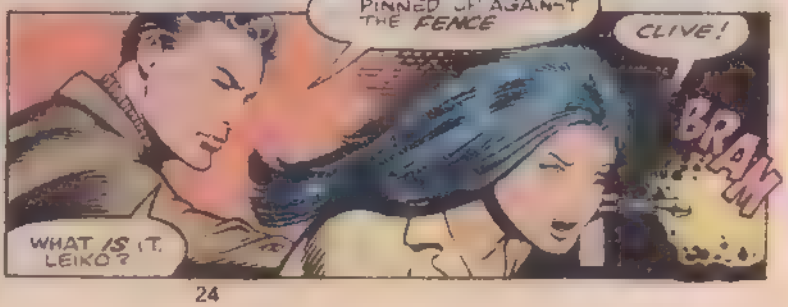

KNOCK OFF THE FLYIN' FEET BLAST IT!
FWAP
I SAID WE WERE GONNA SETTLE THIS HAND TO--

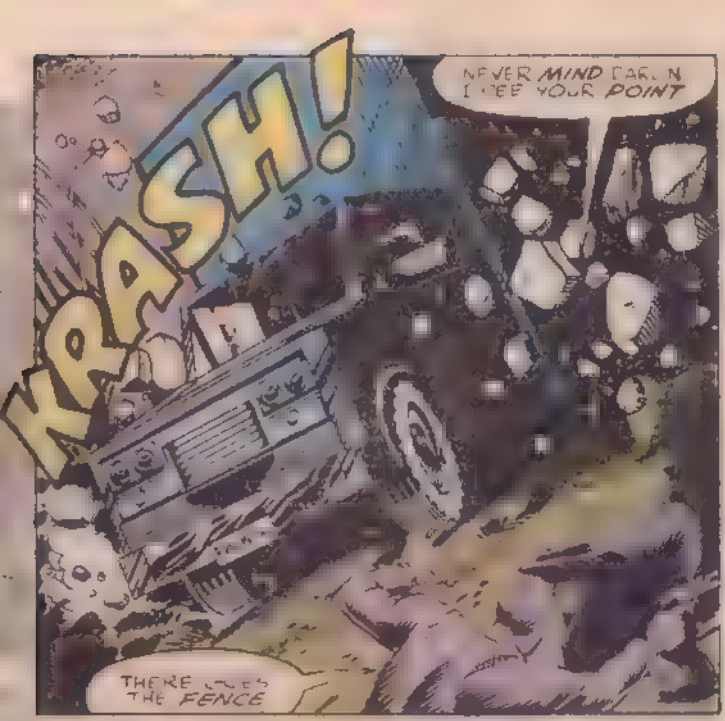
--HAND!
SWOK
UHN!


" HE IS SUPREMELY STRONG. I WILL ACCOMPLISH NOTHING IN A PROLONGED FIGHT WITH HIM

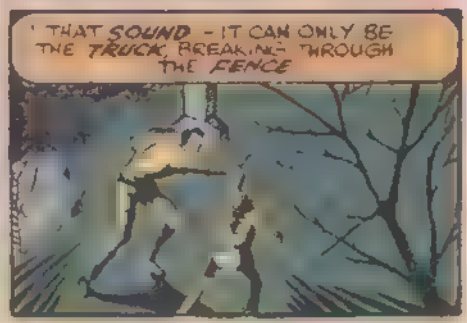
" BUT HOW LONG MUST I KEEP HIM OCCUPIED--

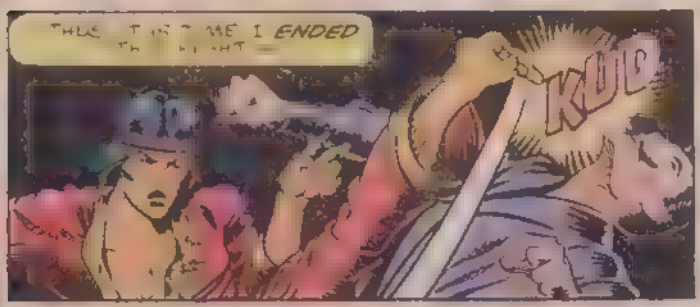

"--BEFORE MY FELLOW SI-FAN REACH SAFETY?
WE'VE GOT A NOW CARLIN


PINNED UP AGAINST THE FENCE
CLIVE!
BRAM
WHAT IS IT, LEIKO?


KRASH!
NEVER MIND DARLIN' I SEE YOUR POINT
THERE GOES THE FENCE

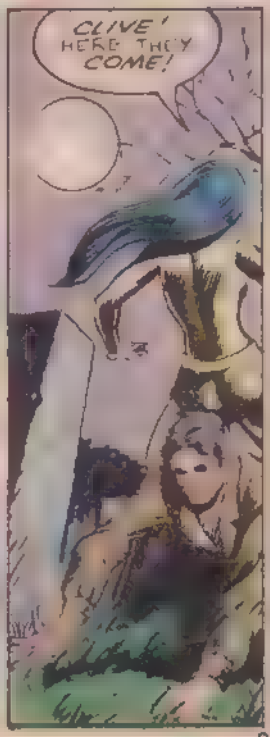
NOT TO MENTION OUR GUNS!


THAT SOUND - IT CAN ONLY BE THE TRUCK, BREAKING THROUGH THE FENCE


THUS IN THE NIGHT I ENDED
KUD

"...AND JOINED THE OTHERS.

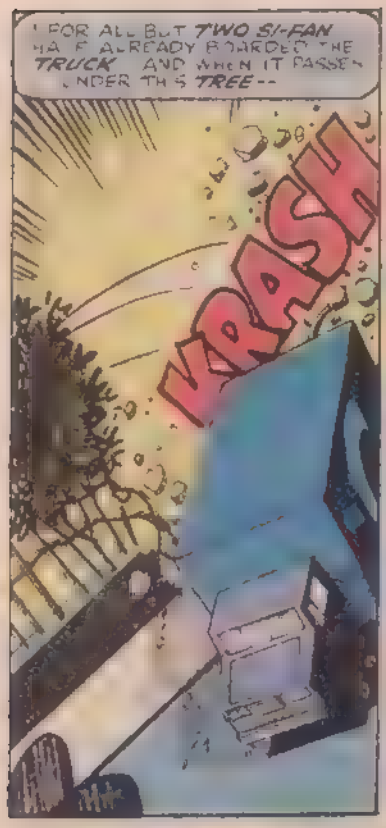
TWO OF YOU - ATTACK THEM WHILE WE LOAD THE COFFINS! QUICKLY!

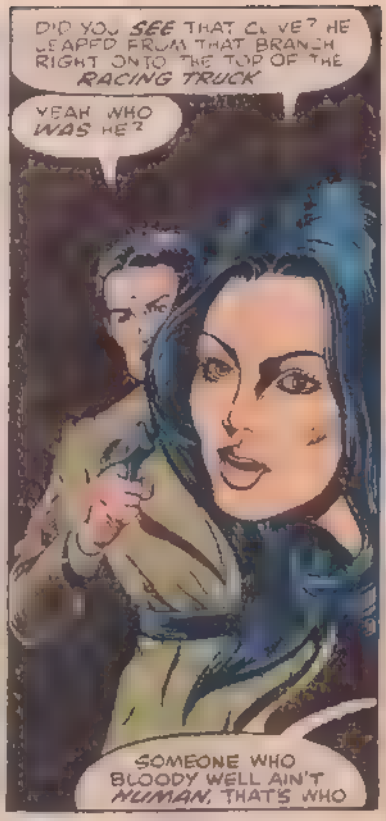

CLIVE! HERE THEY COME!

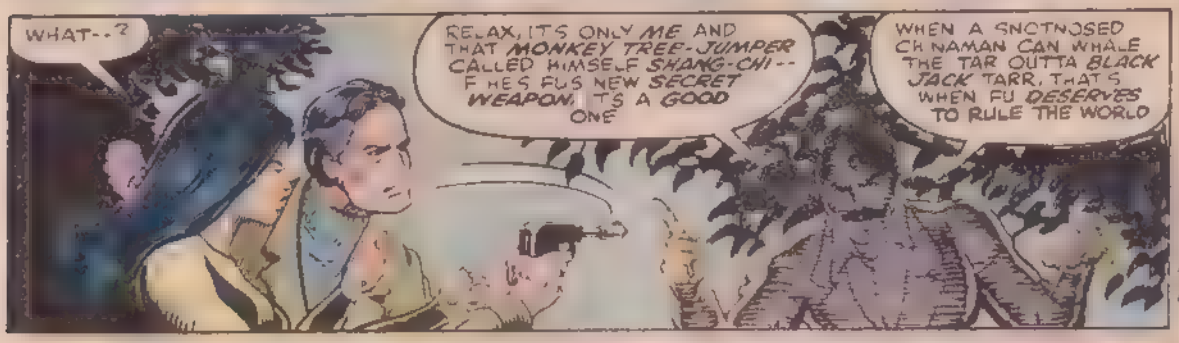
TRY TO HOLD THEM OFF DARLIN' - TILL I FIND OUR GUNS!

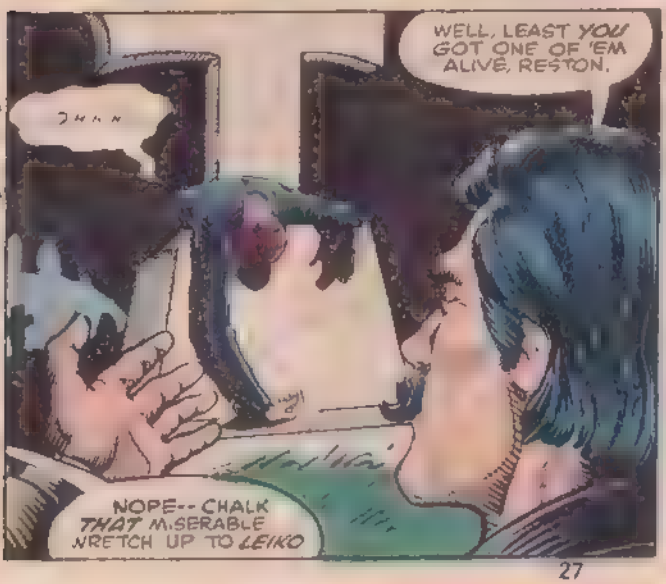
VERY WELL
OOOPH!

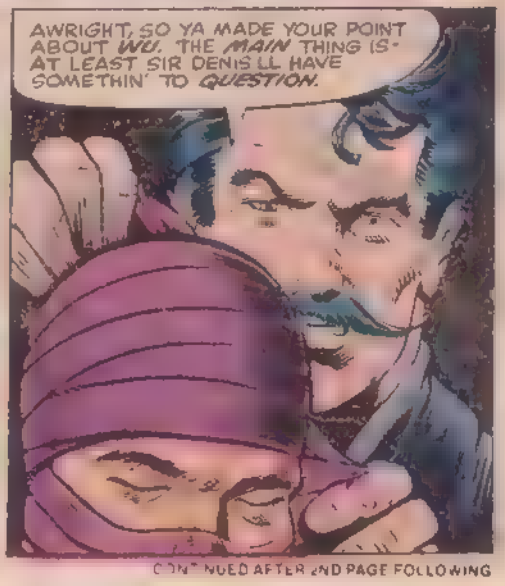
BUT HURRY CLIVE IF THEY GET THOSE COFFINS LOADED BEFORE -
HANG ON DARLIN -- BLASTED GUNS MUST BE AMONG THESE TOMBSTONES SOMEWHERE!
A GIRL? YES A CHINESE GIRL FIGHTING ON THE SIDE OF MY FATHER'S ENEMIES
WHY?
HWAK
COME! WE ARE READY TO GO!
CLIVE, THEY RE GETTING AWAY!
I HEAR YOU, DARLIN' FINALLY FOUND MY BLASTED --
BRAM
--GUN.
BUT IT WILL DO THE BRITISHER LITTLE GOOD











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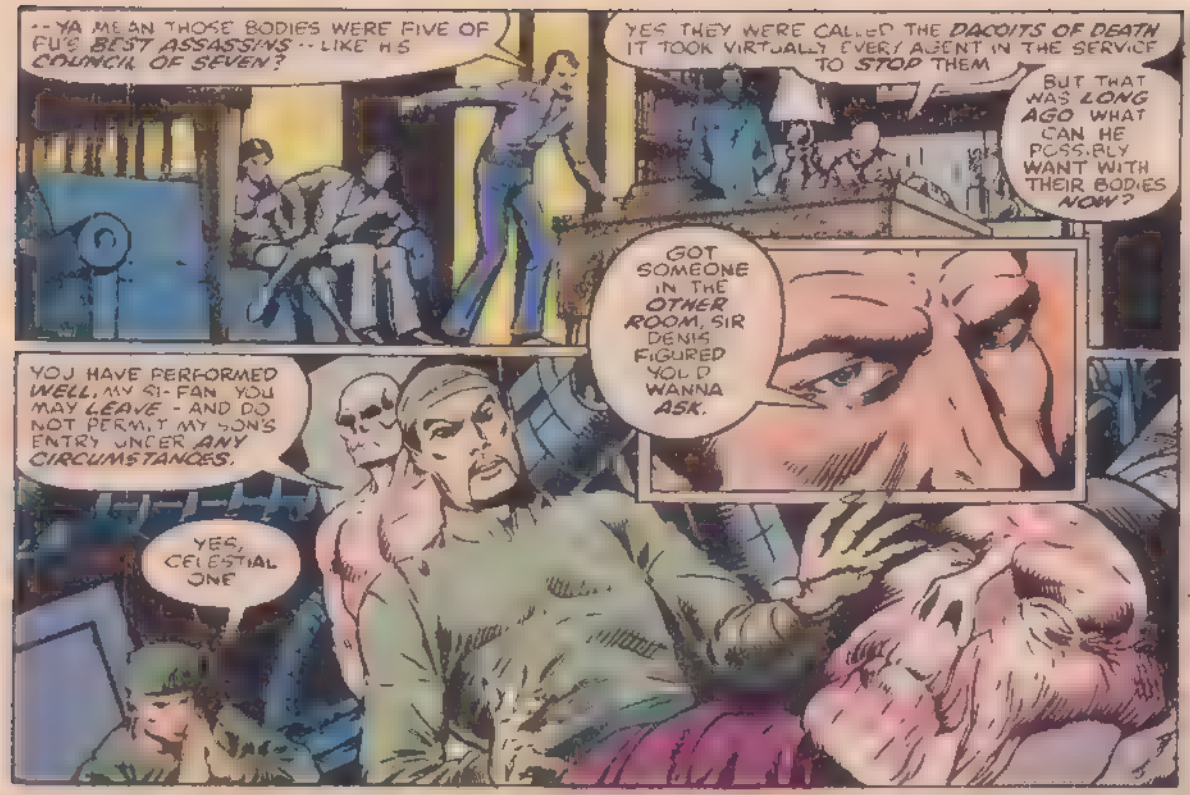
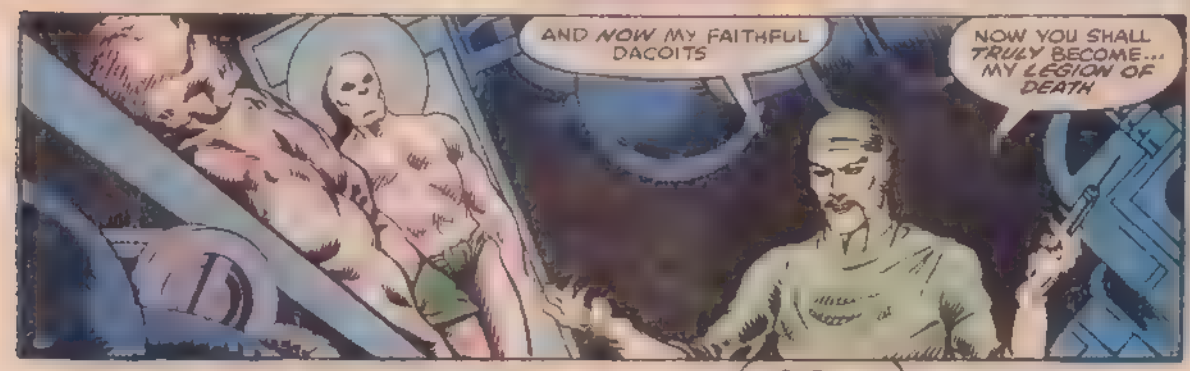

--YA MEAN THOSE BODIES WERE FIVE OF FU'S BEST ASSASSINS -- LIKE HIS COUNCIL OF SEVEN?
YES THEY WERE CALLED THE DACOITS OF DEATH IT TOOK VIRTUALLY EVERY AGENT IN THE SERVICE TO STOP THEM
BUT THAT WAS LONG AGO WHAT CAN HE POSSIBLY WANT WITH THEIR BODIES NOW?
GOT SOMEONE IN THE OTHER ROOM, SIR DENIS FIGURED YOU'D WANNA ASK.
YOU HAVE PERFORMED WELL, MY SI-FAN YOU MAY LEAVE - AND DO NOT PERMIT MY SON'S ENTRY UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.
YES, CELESTIAL ONE

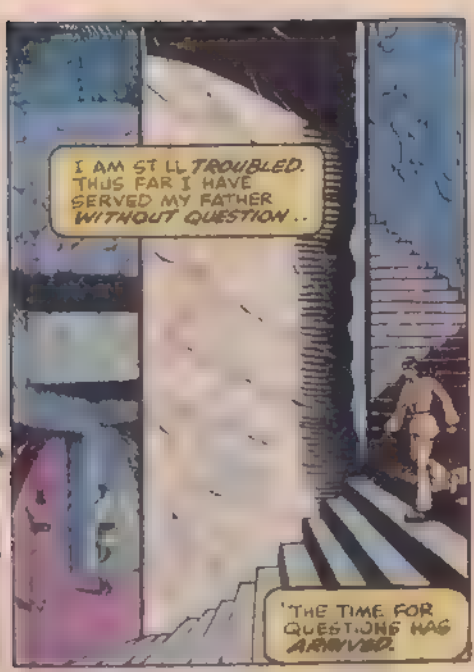

AND NOW MY FAITHFUL DACOITS
NOW YOU SHALL TRULY BECOME... MY LEGION OF DEATH

VERY WELL IF YOU REFUSE TO TALK

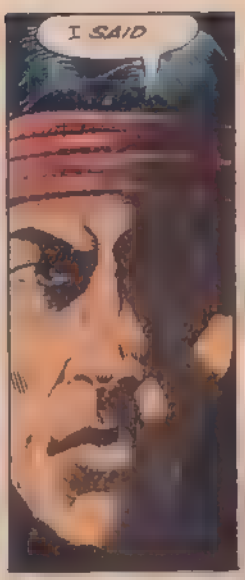
..ADMINISTER THE TRUTH SERUM, NEWTON
YES SIR DENIS

ONE INJECTION
ONLY ONE, AND--

--THE YELLOW DEVIL'LL TALK NOW, SIR DENIS


I AM STILL TROUBLED. THUS FAR I HAVE SERVED MY FATHER WITHOUT QUESTION..
THE TIME FOR QUESTIONS HAS ARRIVED.

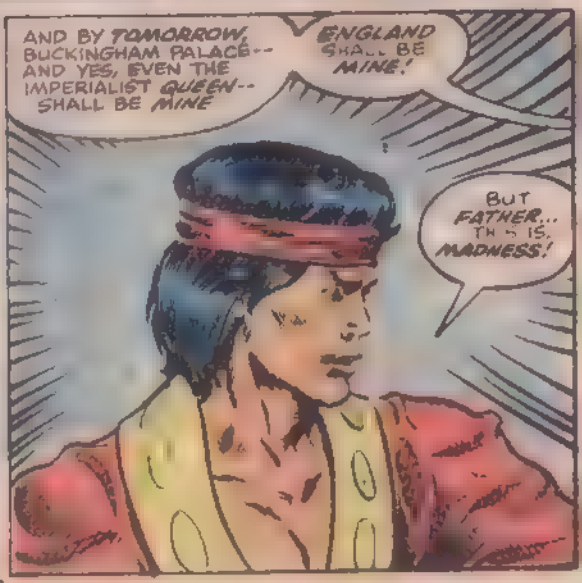
STAND ASIDE SI-FAN. I WISH TO SEE MY FATHER
WE REGRET THAT IT CANNOT BE PERMITTED, SHANG-CHI.


I SAID

SHOK
I WISH TO SEE MY FATHER.
FWAK

"I ENTER TO FIND--
WH-WHAT?
FATHER-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

USING MY SERUM OF RESURRECTION TO TRANSFORM THE BODIES OF MY DACOITS
BY TONIGHT THEY WILL LIVE AND BREATHE AS CREATURES OF MY CREATION.


AND BY TOMORROW, BUCKINGHAM PALACE-- AND YES, EVEN THE IMPERIALIST QUEEN-- SHALL BE MINE
ENGLAND SHALL BE MINE!
BUT FATHER... THIS IS MADNESS!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

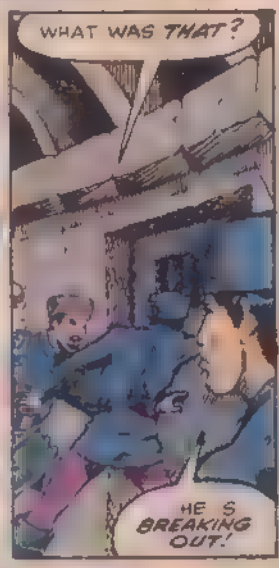
TEA, CELESTIAL ONE?
I AM IN NO MOOD, DUCHARME. THE TIME HAS COME.
WE LEAVE NOW. TELL FOUR OF MY SI-FAN TO REMAIN HERE, GUARDING MY SON'S QUARTERS

AND TELL THEM TO SEE THAT HE DOES NOT LEAVE -- ON PENALTY OF THEIR LIVES

--EVEN HE WOULDN'T DARE!
BUT HE WOULD, CLIVE. GO TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE IMMEDIATELY! I'LL NOTIFY THE PALACE GUARDS--
-- THE POLICE, SPECIAL SQUADS-- BUT HURRY!

CAGED CREATURES DO NOT THINK. I HAVE THOUGHT A LONG TIME. CAGED, I HAVE THOUGHT THE UNTHINKABLE. DEFIANCE OF MY FATHER FU MANCHU.

I CANNOT REMAIN CAGED
KRAT


WHAT WAS THAT?
HE'S BREAKING OUT!

STOP HIM!!
IT IS TOO LATE! HE IS NOT--!

HWOK
CHUD

SLAM

"MY FATHER HAS CHANGED HIS PLANS, DENYING ME MY PLACE IN HIS CURRENT MISSION. THE PLANS MUST BE CHANGED AGAIN.
BUCKINGHAM PALACE

--CREDENTIALS ARE ALL IN ORDER, PAL.
RIGHT, SIR. YOU MAY ENTER THE PALACE
COME ON WE GOTTA ALERT THE
EH--?
LOOK! THE ASSAULTS ALREADY STARTING!
SSCREECH
THOSE TRUCKS - ROARING RIGHT UP TO THE PALACE!
YOU'RE RIGHT, RESTON. THEY'RE FU'S THUGS AWRIGHT - WEARIN GAS-MASKS!
CAN'T BREATHE! FALL BACK!!
BOOSH
WHAT RE THEY DOIN' NOW?
OPENING THE BACKS OF THE TRUCKS-- BUT WHATS INSIDE?
NO.. OH, NO.. IT CAN'T BE!
-BUT IT IS, WU-- THERE'RE FIVE OF 'EM! IT'S GOTTA BE FU'S BLOODY DACOITS OF DEATH!

BUT ITS IMPOSSIBLE! THE RE DEAD!
THOSE GIANT LIZARDS ARE MPOSS BLE, TOO BUT IT AIN T STOPP N EM FROM CRASHIN' THROUGH THE PALACE GATES!
BRAM
BRAM
GAS IS SPREADIN' THIS WAY--COVER YOUR FACES AN FIRE!
T'S NO GOOD--THEY'RE STILL COMIN'
THEN OUR BULLETS CAN T MAKE EM ANY DEADER! GET NSIDE LAST
BOLT THE DOOR RESTON
YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING WU--IF THEY'RE DEAD...
YOU START LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHIN' TO BARRICADE--
KRASH
TOO LATE! THEY'RE N THE ANTEROOM!
COME ON--WE'LL MAKE A STAND DEEPER IN THE PALACE!
GET BACK! GET TO THE ROYAL FAMILY, YA BLOODY FOOLS!
GET EM TO SAFETY HIDE EM AND DEFEND EM WITH YOUR ONLY LIVES!
WE'LL TRY TO HOLD 'EM OFF TILL OUTSIDE HELP ARRIVES!
NOW MOVE!!

BUCKINGHAM PALACE A PLACE WRAPPED IN THICK FOG OR SMOG AND SO IS CHAOS IT HAS BEGUN
SI FAN GATHER AROUND AN ARRIVING VEHICLE FROM WHICH EMERGES A TALL REGAL FIGURE
HIS STEPS ARE UNHURRIED AS HE SWEEPS THROUGH THE HALLS
TO THE PALACE ENTRANCE
IT IS MY FATHER
HE HAS SEIZED THE PALACE
IT IS FU MANCHU
AND ALL WHO RESIDE WITHIN
BRITISH POLICE ARRIVE NOW MANY TO BE CUT DOWN BY FIRE FROM SI-FAN WEAPONS
THIS CAUSES I LOSE MY TUNIC TO COVER MY FACE
THEY FALL BACK CONTENT TO MERELY CONTAIN THE PALACE BUT THE BATTLE STILL RAGES IN FRONT
ONE NOTICES MY ENTRANCE--
UNTIL I REACH THE SIDE OF THE PALACE AWAY FROM THE BATTLE
" NO ONE SEES MY CLIMB
"--THROUGH AN UPPER WINDOW.

" THE REASON IS CLEAR. HELD IN THE SOUND OF STRIFE. I MOVE QUICKLY AND THE SOUND GROWS
THE LIZARDS! IF WE CAN. STOP THE LIZARDS--
--WE CAN STOP THEM!
BRAM!
LE KOS RIGHT TARR!
YEAH THE THINGS ARE DROPPIN' AWRIGHT--
--BUT THE DACOITS ARE STILL COMIN ON FOOT! AN'T NOTHIN' CAN STOP THEM UNLESS
BRAM
AT LEAST WE'LL SLOW THEM DOWN!
RESTON-- WHAT ABOUT FIRE? MAYBE WE CAN BURN 'EM DOWN TO NOTHIN!
IT'S WORTH A TRY, TARR-- I'LL GET SOME FLAME-THROWERS!
THE ONES FROM THE BURIAL GROUNDS
FIGHTING AGAINST THAT WHICH WE REMOVED FROM THOSE GROUNDS
" MY FATHER'S DACOITS.
'NO ? DO NOT BELIEVE IT I REFUSE TO
SHWAK
ARRH!

CONTINUED AFTER 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

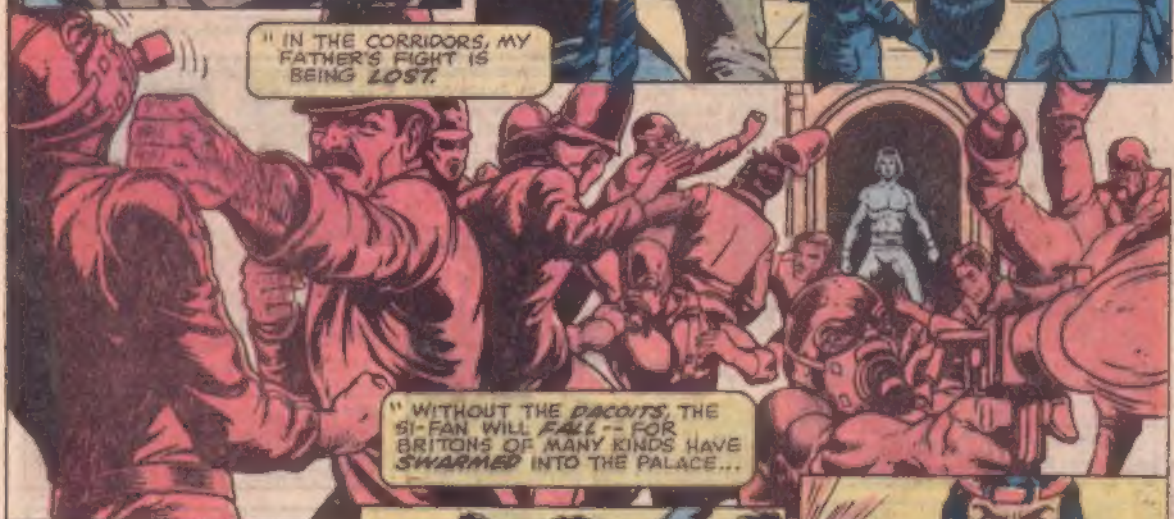
LET'S SEE THE STINKING THINGS CHEW ON A LITTLE FIRE!

NOOO!!

" IT IS TOO LATE. THEY FALL, IN SMOKE AND ASHES...
"...EMBRACING DEATH FOR A SECOND TIME.

PAK
NUH--?!

WHAT'S WITH HIM? I SAVED HIS LIFE TOO.
YEAH, WHOSE SIDE IS HE ON?


" IN THE CORRIDORS, MY FATHER'S FIGHT IS BEING LOST.
" WITHOUT THE DACOITS, THE SI-FAN WILL FALL -- FOR BRITONS OF MANY KINDS HAVE SWARMED INTO THE PALACE...

" I FIGHT MY WAY THROUGH THE OPPOSING FORCES, STRIKING SI-FAN AND BRITON ALIKE.

" IT DOES NOT MATTER WHOM I STRIKE. TO ME, THEY ARE ALL OPPONENTS...

"...BLOCKING THE PATH TO MY FATHER.

"HE SITS THE THRONE, GLOATING...

ENGLAND IS MINE.

SHANG-CHI! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

NOTHING IS YOURS -- NOT EVEN YOUR SON.

LEARNING THAT I NO LONGER HAVE A FATHER, AND THAT YOU HAVE NOTHING -- NOTHING BUT A VISION OF CRUELTY!

I HAVE THIS PALACE, THIS NATION, AND SOON --

NO, YOUR DACOITS HAVE AGAIN GONE TO DEATH.

--AND YOU.

DUE TO YOUR INTERFERENCE!

BUT I HAVE NOT LOST, SHANG-CHI. I HAVE ALL OF ETERNITY TO FULFILL MY DREAM... WHILE YOU HAVE LESS TIME THAN YOU THINK.

"TIME PASSES, AND THE AFFAIR ENDS...

YOUR FOES HAVE STORMED THE PALACE. SOON THEY WILL REACH THIS THRONE-ROOM --

THEN HE IS GONE.

YOU'VE DONE WELL -- NOTHING LEFT BUT THE MOP-UP.

MOVE ALONG.

RIGHT, SIR DENIS, BUT FU HIMSELF MANAGED TO SLIP AWAY, BLAST THE DEVIL.

I'VE HEARD THAT ENDING MANY TIMES BLACK JACK.

THE FIEND IS SIMPLY NOT HUMAN! HOW HE CAN --

LOOK! IT'S THAT "SHANG-CHI," SIR DENIS!

HE HELPED US -- OR AT LEAST SEEMED TO.

SHANG-CHI! WAIT, LAD!
"WHO? AN OLD MAN?

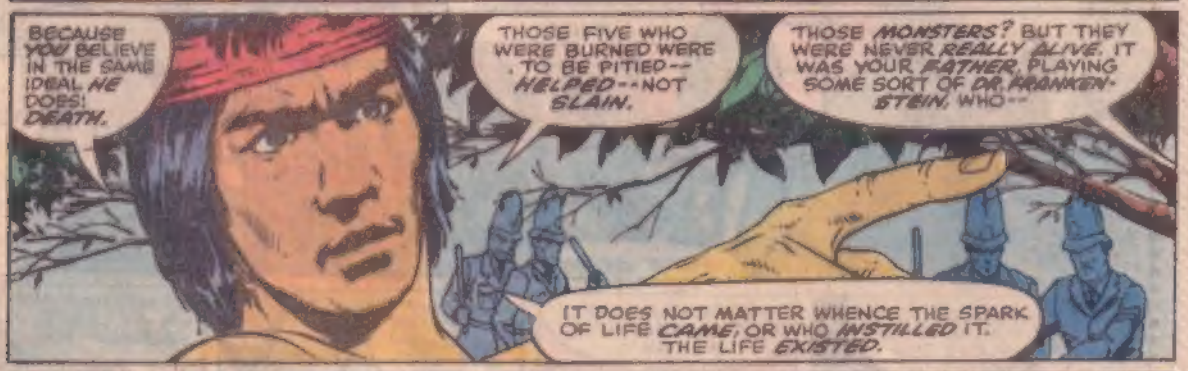
LEIKO TELLS ME YOU HELPED, IF YOU'D CARE TO JOIN US IN THE HUNT FOR FU MANCHU.

JOIN YOU--? WHEN YOU ARE THE SAME AS MY FATHER?

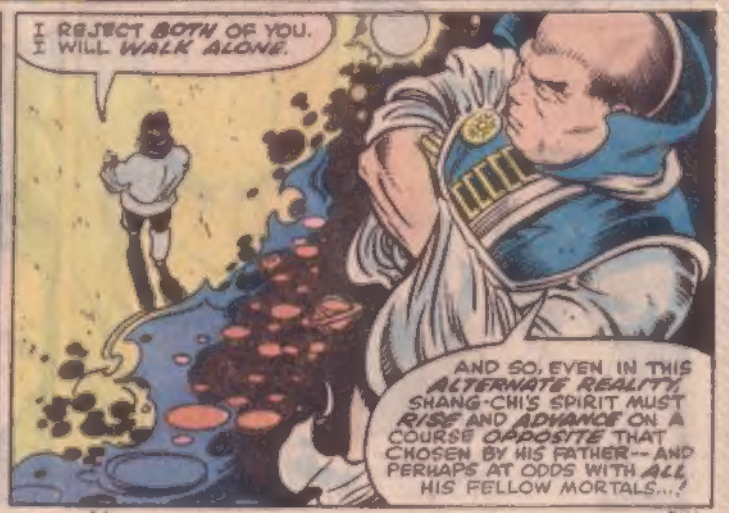
YOUR WHAT?! YOU'RE HIS... SON?

I WAS...

...UNTIL I SAW HIS EVIL.
I HAVE NOW DISCARDED ALL ALLEGIANCE TO HIM.
THEN WHY NOT JOIN US?


BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE IN THE SAME IDEAL HE DOES! DEATH.
THOSE FIVE WHO WERE BURNED WERE TO BE PITIED-- HELPED--NOT SLAIN.
THOSE MONSTERS? BUT THEY WERE NEVER REALLY ALIVE. IT WAS YOUR FATHER, PLAYING SOME SORT OF DR. FRANKEN-STEIN, WHO--
IT DOES NOT MATTER WHENCE THE SPARK OF LIFE CAME, OR WHO INSTILLED IT. THE LIFE EXISTED.

MY FATHER WAS WRONG TO GRANT IT. YOU WERE EQUALLY WRONG TO TAKE IT AWAY.
THE SANCTITY OF LIFE IS GREATER THAN ANY MAN WHO LIVES, INCLUDING MY FATHER-- INCLUDING YOU.


I REJECT BOTH OF YOU. I WILL WALK ALONE.
AND SO, EVEN IN THIS ALTERNATE REALITY, SHANG-CHI'S SPIRIT MUST RISE AND ADVANCE ON A COURSE OPPOSITE THAT CHOSEN BY HIS FATHER-- AND PERHAPS AT ODDS WITH ALL HIS FELLOW MORTALS...?

-FIN-

WHY NOT?

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

ROY THOMAS
EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD
ASSISTANT EDITOR

A BULLETIN OF SORTS FROM ROY THOMAS, EDITOR: With this issue's Master of Kung Fu opus, I must reluctantly end my association with the WHAT IF title I have conceived, edited, and far too occasionally written over the past two or three years. I find that a Cimmerian named Conan and a thunder god named Thor— in all their various comicbook and comic-strip incarnations— are taking all the time I have just now; so rather than spread myself too thin, I'm turning the series over to Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter and future editor Mark Gruenwald.

It's been a ball conceiving and writing tales of Spider-Man as a member of the fabulous F F— the Hulk with Bruce Banner's brain— the Invaders in a (very real) post-World War Two metamorphosis into the fabled All-Winners Squad— and most especially Conan the Barbarian as a visitor to a troubled century.

It's been almost as much fun presiding over other such offbeat highlights as Man-Spider (as depicted by the irrepressible Scott Shawl), the Hulk as a refugee from the 1950's "teenage monster" movie, this issue's Kung Fu special, a trio of origins for Spidey, and even a nutty "Sgt. Fury in Outer Space" tale with which this letters page concerns itself.

But, it's time to move on— and rather than continue to edit WHAT IF from the West Coast, which was always a problem in cases where the writers and/or artists were elsewhere, I'm proud and happy to leave it in the hands of Jim and Mark, who can now wrestle (successfully, I'm sure) with the perplex problems inherent in parallel worlds.

Thanks a zillion for all the many, many kind cards and letters— 69% of which contained better WHAT IF suggestions than my successors and I are likely to come up with on our own. Oh yes, I'll still be doing an occasional Thor WHAT IF, I suppose— or even a special Conan issue, if just the right (and non-twentieth-century) idea presents itself. And if Chris Claremont and John Byrne ever have the time to flesh out an idea of mine concerning the X-Men's origin, I'll be there as co-editor as well, a sort of halcyon last hurrah. Otherwise, I'll just be reading and savoring from now on— the same as you. I hope we *both* enjoy ourselves.

Now, for a sampling of mini-missives concerning Pearl Harbor among the stars, as seen by Gary Friedrich, Don Glut, Herb Trimpe, and Pablo Marcos. . . .

WHAT IF #14 was great. Herb and Pablo's artwork was out of sight. The story by Friedrich and Glut was a definite change of pace— one of the few stories that didn't have to parallel another, older story. Baron Strucker, of course, was the perfect choice to become a traitor to the human race, while Nick Fury proved that in any time or place he's a true Marvel hero. I hope his own war-mag will soon drop the reprint stuff and change to the space-opera format previewed here. Think about it.

Charles David Haskell
15 W. 139th St., Apt 4R
New York, NY 10037

Truth to tell, C.D., when his old buddy Gary Friedrich first suggested the "Sgt. Fury in Outer Space" plot, the main reason Roy accepted it was because he felt it might be a good pilot for a series— the 1970's (and 80's?) equivalent of the "Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD" series in the mid-60's, though with the additional and troublesome twist of a parallel world origin. The *second* reason R.T. gave the go-ahead on the idea was that he himself has enjoyed the truly offbeat issues of WHAT IF the most; and he figured that if it was a story *he* wouldn't mind reading, perhaps a significant percentage of Marveldom assembled would feel the same way.

While visiting my local comics emporium, I was delighted to see that the latest Marvels had just come in. A crowd quickly gathered around one of the titles, and an argument began:

"Thomas has desecrated Marvel's effort of reaching a mature audience with WHAT IF #14."

"Whatcha mean? Lookit where Gabe shoots the robot with a sonic laser bugle, and lookit dem fishbowl helmets they wear. Ain't that stuff for mature readers?"

"This story contradicts the entire WHAT IF concept of presenting stories which *could* have evolved from the Marvel Universe. . ."

"Yeah, but it's nice how Fury zaps the bad guys!"

"Marvel is only attempting to capitalize off STAR WARS and BATTLESTAR GALACTICA with a cheap publication which demeans Marvel's usual high quality."

"Then howcum you're buyin' one?"

"Due to Herb Trimpe's art being the saving grace of an otherwise abysmally poor issue."

I picked up the issue which the gentlemen were speaking of. Mr. Trimpe's artwork was superb. . .despite the fishbowls.

Bob, Brian, and Kody Hundertmark
Rockville, MD 20853

Hmmm. . . sounds to us as if the conversation you "overheard" was as one-sided as it must have been atypical, lads. Though the main purpose of the WHAT IF series was, indeed, generally to show stories which *almost* happened in earlier Marvel issues, except for a particular turn of fate, it was always Roy's inner intent— as witnessed as early in the series as #4's Invaders epic— to do other things with it, as well. Including *have fun.*

Dear Guys,

I really like WHAT IF. I really do. The basic concept of every issue so far has been great (especially your premiere issue, my favorite). But what happened? It's been mostly downhill since #6. The ideas are still great, but somewhere the spark has been lost. Don't get me wrong: There were bright spots along the way, such as the Man-Spider story in #8 and Conan in #13. Probably the lowest part so far was Kirby's handling of the Bullpen/Fantastic Four story. *What if* Roy Thomas had handled that issue, as originally intended? (Any chance of ever seeing that?)

That brings me to my plea: Please, oh please, Roy, take over WHAT IF as regular writer as well as editor! You were born to write WHAT IF. Your issues have been the best to date. There is no way to justify the lackluster work on so fine a comic idea. Roy, there is no way WHAT IF can survive unless you (or maybe Stan the Man himself. . . yeah! What if Stan Lee wrote WHAT IF?) write it regularly. Even if you gave the writers who do work on it a few pointers on how the mag should be written, the improvement would be tremendous. Don't get me wrong, though. The other writers often surpassed my expectations; they just don't compare with Roy.

So please, Roy, harken to the call. Your brainchild is sick. It needs your help as soon as possible.

Derek McCulloch
(No Address Given)

Hmmm. . . the departing Mr. T. will just have to hope that Jim, Mark, and the Bullpen gang can prove you wrong, Derek, since, as noted above, Roy is relinquishing his chores on WHAT IF with this issue. He's just become too busy with both comics and other writing assignments (TV, etc.) to give WHAT IF the time and attention it deserves. Besides, Jim (Trouble) Shooter himself authored one of the better-received early issues of the mag— while Multiverse! Mark Gruenwald is justly famed in comics-fan circles for his studies of Alternate Realities (that's parallel worlds to you). Let's give 'em a chance, okay?